

360zine

ISSUE 62 | JANUARY 2012

Free Magazine For Xbox 360 Gamers. *Read it, Print it, Send it to your mates...*

HANDS-ON PREVIEW! 

KINGDOMS OF AMALUR: RECKONING

Has Fable met its match?

REVIEWED!

**Battlefield 3:
Back to
Karkand** 

PREVIEWED!

**Soulcalibur
V** 

REVIEWED!

**Gears of War 3:
Raam's
Shadow** 

FEATURE!

**2012's BIGGEST
Games!**

*BioShock Infinite, Halo 4,
GTA V & more!* 



Welcome to 360Zine



So, how was it for you? When the last of the turkey meat had been stripped from the carcass, the final mince pie eaten and the last Celebrations chocolate munched, what games were you playing? Skyrim was clearly the big game this Christmas in what was, at the end, a year full of bluster and not a massive amount of substance. Sure there were some big games, but there were a lot that didn't quite match up to the hype surrounding them.

With our crystal ball gazed firmly focused though, we can confidently predict that 2012 is going to be a doozy. GTA V? Rumours of a new Xbox? We can't map out everything that'll be occurring over the next 12 months, but our Games of 2012 feature this issue gives you some of the definite highlights. Enjoy.

**360Zine
FEEDBACK!**
Click here to
tell us what
you think of
the new issue

David Scammell, Editor
360Zine@gamerzines.com

MEET THE TEAM

Probably the best
games writers on
the planet



Andy Griffiths
The PC wizard performs his
magic on the Xbox 360, too.



Dean Mortlock
Gaming is Dean's business,
and business is good.



Back to Karkand
The classic map returns

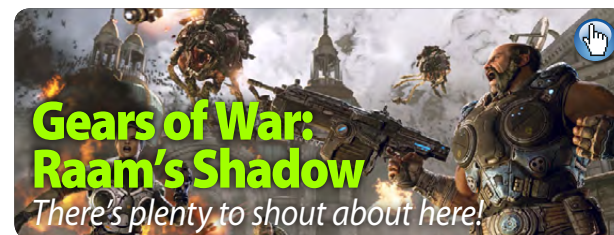
Don't miss! This month's top highlights



**KINGDOMS OF
AMALUR: RECKONING**
A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH?



Soulcalibur V
Bringing the fight back to Xbox



**Gears of War:
Raam's Shadow**
There's plenty to shout about here!



Sonic CD

QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away!

2012 Top 25
Feature
Kingdoms
of Amalur
Soulcalibur V
The Secrets of
the Dashboard

Gears of War 3:
Raam's Shadow
Battlefield 3:
Back to Karkand
Sonic CD
Dead or Alive:
Call of Duty 2

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If you are reading this, then you didn't choose "Play" when Adobe Reader asked you about multimedia when you opened the magazine.

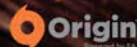
Without the multimedia playing, the magazine will look correct, but you will be missing out on all of the extra content built into each issue, like videos, animated screenshots, annotations, quizzes, competitions and more.

We recommend you close and re-open the magazine and select "Play" when asked about the multimedia to enjoy the magazine as intended.



KINGDOMS OF AMALUR RECKONING™

*It is your destiny to fight. To make the wicked taste blood. To reclaim a massive, master-crafted realm.
Let none predict your future. Let no force dictate your path. Follow destiny alone.*



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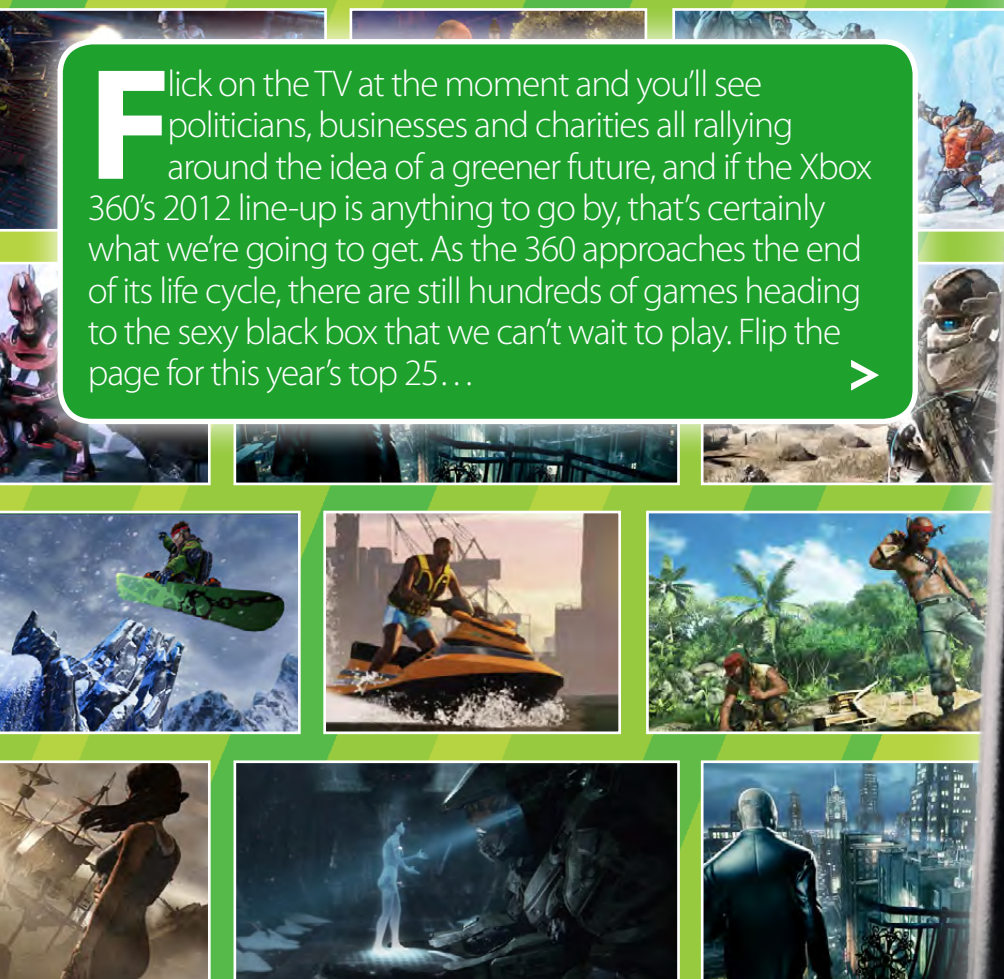


CONTROL →



THE TOP 25 OF 2012

Flip on the TV at the moment and you'll see politicians, businesses and charities all rallying around the idea of a greener future, and if the Xbox 360's 2012 line-up is anything to go by, that's certainly what we're going to get. As the 360 approaches the end of its life cycle, there are still hundreds of games heading to the sexy black box that we can't wait to play. Flip the page for this year's top 25...





25 Final Fantasy XIII-2

Out: February | Square-Enix

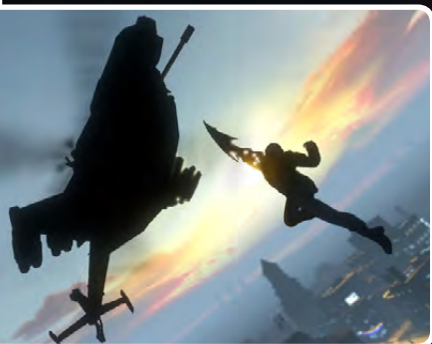
We still can't get our head around the difference between FFXIII's Fal'cie and the L'cie, but hopefully Square-Enix's super sequel should start offering some much-needed answers. XIII's 40-hour sequel offers big improvements over its faltering predecessor, including bigger worlds and far fewer corridors.



Prototype 2 24

Out: April | Activision

Steroid abuse reaches a new high as Prototype 2 anti-hero Sergeant James Heller dons mutant arms, legs and all-new superpowers to wreak vengeance on virus-spreading villain Alex Mercer. The sequel to 2009's fun but flawed action game could be one of the best openworlders of 2012.



23 Ghost Recon: Future Soldier

Out: March | Ubisoft

Unless you've got a stake in terrorism, these Ghosts aren't the type of ghouls who'll be keeping you up at night. Returning after a five-year break, Ghost Recon's combination of cool gadgets, ace set-pieces and cover-based gunplay provides a shooter to remember.



22 Aliens: Colonial Marines

Out: Spring | SEGA

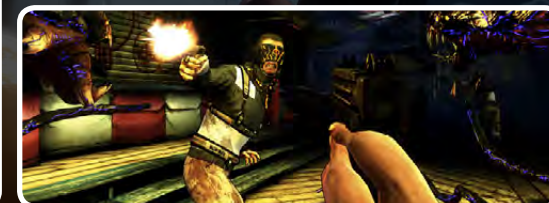
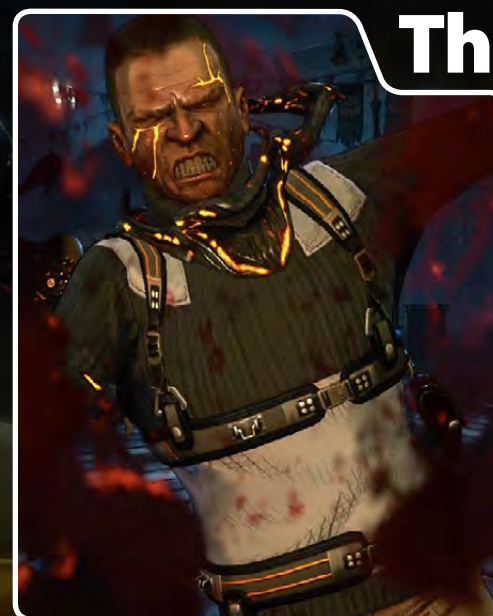
If you can think of an Aliens quote, chances are it'll be in Colonial Marines, as Borderlands developer Gearbox Studios takes players on a xenomorph-filled, pant-cacking tour of The Sulaco and LV-246 as they tell the tale of the events that occurred between Aliens and Alien 3.



The Darkness II 21

Out: February | 2K Games

Who needs guns when you've got flippin' great razor-toothed demon tentacles sticking out of your shoulders? Well, Jackie Estacado it seems, who returns in this shooter sequel to 2007's uber-violent mafia thriller. Featuring a new and improved control scheme, this could be a beast of a shooter.



Alan Wake's 20 American Nightmare

Out: Spring | Microsoft

Alan Wake's imagination is coming back to haunt him. Heading onto Xbox Live Arcade in a couple of months' time, American Nightmare begins after the end of the original's DLC, rejoining the fiction writer as he battles against the horrors of his books.



Alan Wake Screenshot

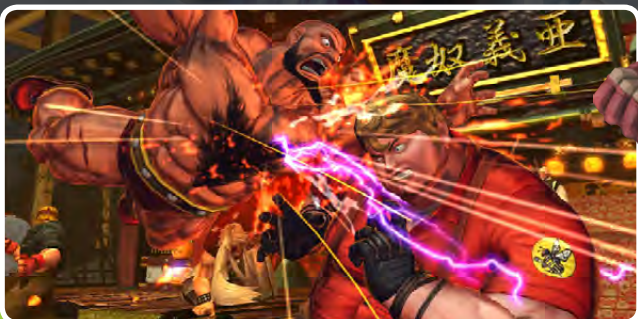


Alan Wake Screenshot

19 Street Fighter X Tekken

Out: March | Capcom

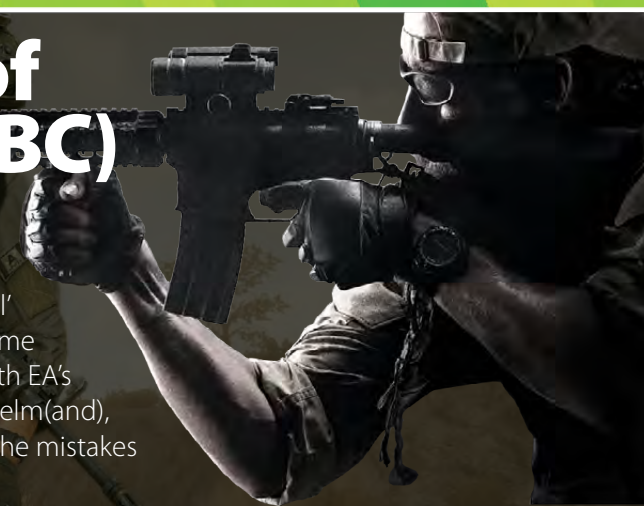
A mash-up of the two biggest names in fighting, Street Fighter X Tekken has gotten the fanboys frothing at the mouth. Promising such epic battles as Ryu vs Kazuya, Nina vs Chun Li and Bob vs Hwoarang, this is a fight you won't want to miss.



18 Medal of Honor 2 (TBC)

Out: TBC (Expected October) | EA

If that promotional flier included with Battlefield 3's to be trusted, ol' beardy's coming back to shoot some more insurgents later this year. With EA's Danger Close studio back at the helm (and), we're hoping that it's learnt from the mistakes of DICE's misfiring multiplayer.



Mass Effect 3 17

Out: March | EA

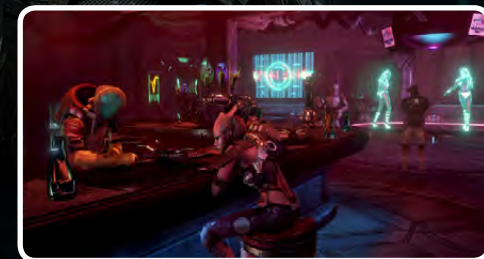
An epic finale for Shepard's last game is a given, but we've still got our doubts over whether ME3 will hit the dizzy heights of its predecessor, which sees Shepard rallying the galaxy together for a final showdown with the Reapers.



16 Prey 2

Out: TBC | Bethesda

Take a sci-fi shooter and equip it with a Wild West-style bounty-hunting lead, and you've got the idea behind Prey 2. One of the least talked about games of 2012, this could well be a surprise hit.



15 Borderlands 2

Out: TBC | 2K Games

Making Skyrim's art direction look positively boring, the brilliantly gaudy world of Borderlands 2 returns later this year with even more colour, craziness and (most importantly) guns. New character types and a brand-new quest makes this one of this year's biggest RPGs.



Lollipop Chainsaw 14

Out: TBC | Ubisoft

Sex, zombies and chainsaws – Lollipop Chainsaw could only be from the weird and wonderful mind of Shadows of the Damned's Suda 51. Expect an uber-violent action game to die for.



13 Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance

Out: TBC | Konami

Kojima's top stealth series has been given a facelift for this oddly named spin-off, which looks a lot like a Metal Gear-themed Ninja Gaiden. And with Bayonetta developer Platinum Games in charge, Revengeance looks likely to give Team Ninja's next a run for its money.



12 South Park: The Game

Out: Autumn/Winter | THQ



Those foul-mouthed, yellow-snowball throwing children will be f*&%ing up your 360 later this year courtesy of Fallout: New Vegas developer Obsidian. With Trey Parker and Matt Stone overseeing development, this RPG could be the South Park game we've been waiting for.

11 SSX

Out: February | EA

Awesome stunts and mental courses make SSX the first must-have of 2012.



"MODERN WARFARE SHOULD BE VERY AFRAID"



FEEL THE BATTLE BATTLEFIELD 3™

28.10.11



PLAYBACK OPTIONS:



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BATTLEFIELD.COM/UK



CONTROL →



10 Max Payne 3

Out: March | Rockstar Games

For a man close to retirement, life doesn't appear to be easing up on poor old Max Payne. Slung across the border to South America, Max has found his way into the private security forces of a wealthy Brazilian family, and you can imagine where it all goes wrong from there. Slick, stylish and teeming in action, Max Payne 3 is old-school shooting at its very best.



9 Splinter Cell 6

Out: TBC | Ubisoft

Probably the game with the biggest chances of slipping into 2013, Splinter Cell 6 is rumoured to be another reboot of the series after 2010's love it/hate it Splinter Cell Conviction. In development at new Ubisoft's new Toronto studio and under the watchful eyes of the ever-gorgeous Jade Raymond, Sam Fisher's return could be huge.



8 Assassin's Creed III (TBC)

Out: TBC (Expected November) | Ubisoft



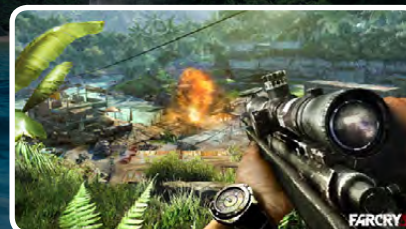
Assassin's Creed 1 Screenshot

Following last year's underwhelming entry, Ubisoft has reassured 360Zine that we won't be disappointed with this year's Assassin's Creed, with rumours pointing towards a much-needed new setting and new assassin for this year's game.

7 Hitman: Absolution

Out: TBC (Expected Summer) | Square-Enix

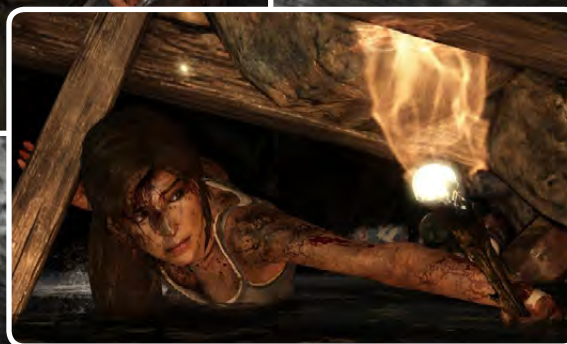
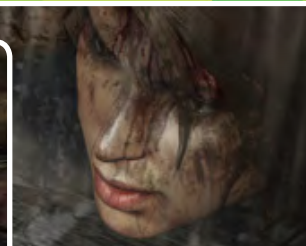
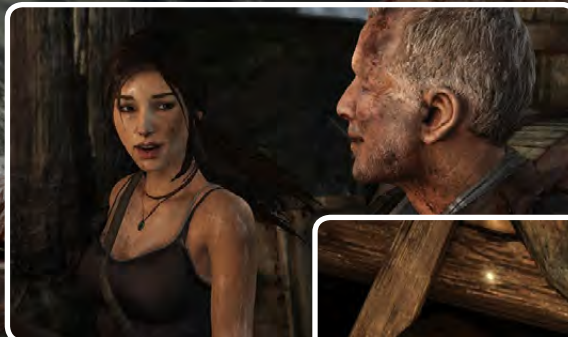
Button up that suit and get ready to make a killing, Agent 47's return could well be his most exciting mission yet. Given a blockbuster budget and a huge presentation overhaul, IO's first next-gen Hitman looks seriously slick.



Far Cry 3 6

Out: TBC (Expected Autumn) | Ubisoft

Lord of the Flies crossed with Rambo, Far Cry 3 follows photographer Jason Brody as he fights for his life on an island overrun by violent thugs, while saving his girlfriend from the hands of a vicious crime syndicate. A sandbox shooter with characterisation and storytelling at the heart of its cut-throat gunplay, Far Cry 3 could be one of the standout shooters of the generation.



Tomb Raider 5

Out: Autumn | Square-Enix

The muddled face of Miss Croft might be a million miles away from what we're used to seeing of the meticulously groomed explorer, but this year's reboot should see a much needed return to form for the British beauty. Taking up the spotlight in the absence of Drake, Lara's survival adventure could even teach Naughty Dog a thing or two.

Okay, so we're not entirely sure whether this year's Need for Speed game will be a straight sequel to 2010's amazing Hot Pursuit, but EA would be mad not to, wouldn't they? One thing's for sure though, Criterion *are* back in charge and promise that this year's racer will feature even more insane crashes and epic chases. Bring it.

4 Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2 (TBC)

Out: TBC (Expected November) | EA





3 BioShock Infinite

Out: TBC | 2K Games

Can you believe it's been almost five years since the original BioShock hit our disc trays? And nothing's managed to make a dent on its carefully constructed narrative and intense atmosphere since. Until now that is, where Irrational's Project Icarus looks certain to set a new benchmark in gaming.



Prepare for another year of everyone humming *that* theme tune as everyone's favourite sci-fi duo Master Chief and Cortana grace our Xbox 360s once again. Details are light, but 343 Industries will want to make a name for themselves with their first Halo. Expect one of the biggest gaming events of the year.

Halo 4 2

Out: Christmas | Microsoft



SAINTS ROW

— THE THIRD —



STRAP IT ON 18.11.11

PLAYBACK OPTIONS:



XBOX 360 XBOX LIVE



PS3



PC

DVD-ROM



SAINTSROW.COM





1 Grand Theft Auto V

Out: TBC | Rockstar Games

Shooting straight to the top of Twitter's global trending list during its surprise announcement last November, GTA V is easily the most-anticipated release in years. Featuring a brand-new story set among the city of Los Santos, an area first seen in the PS2's San Andreas, Rockstar's prowess in the genre could lead to some of the smartest, most entertaining crime capers yet.

Records will be smashed, and jaws will be dropped.



TWO ASSASSINS.

ONE DESTINY.



PLAYBACK OPTIONS:



AVAILABLE NOVEMBER 15TH



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UBISOFT



CONTROL →



RECKONING

Publisher: EA

Developer: 38 Studios

and Big Huge Games

Heritage: Catan (BHG)

Kinect Compatible: No

ETA: 10th February

**PREVIEW
FEEDBACK!**
Could *Reckoning*
take down
Fable? Let us
know what
you think!

KINGDOMS OF AMALUR: RECKONING

A force to be reckoned with?

When it comes to fantasy RPGs, there's only really one franchise synonymous with the 360... *Fable*. Yet despite that series' myriad of successes with accessible combat, great storytelling and its love for man's best friend, there come a point where many gamers have hankered for something just a little bit meatier – an adventure which has all the trappings of a fully-fledged RPG, yet streamlined into

a neat action-oriented package. Enter EA, the latest publisher attempting to broaden their horizons with a brand new RPG, *Reckoning*.

Created by ex-Elder Scrolls lead Ken Rolston and fantasy author R.A. Salvatore (and with a little help on the side by *Spawn* creator Todd McFarlane), *Reckoning* sees players placed as the only hope against Tuatha Deohn, a mysterious faction plotting to eradicate the entire population of fantasy world Amalur.



*"A fantasy RPG created
by ex-Elder Scrolls lead
Ken Rolston"*





"Reckoning's mixture of magic and melee combat carries an incredible amount of depth"



> Kingdoms of Amalur cont.

Only thing is, you're dead. Or at least you are at the start. The game's opening sees you awakening from the clutches of death, where – in typical RPG fashion – you're given the opportunity to change your fate, alter your look and help those ever-needy NPCs around you.

Reckoning's an openworld RPG meaning you're free to explore the world at a whim, completing quests, discovering dungeons and chatting with the hundreds of NPCs scattered throughout the game. We were shown the game's island city of Rathir, with the sprawling metropolis making Fable's Bowerstone seem like a country hamlet. As you explore the city you'll see NPCs going about their daily business, interacting with

one another, visiting stalls and acting out their lives, while a boat ride over to the mainland offers a sparser experience with enemies and wildlife populating locations.


Whether every location is worth exploring, however – something Skyrim got so right with its hidden sub-narratives and loot – is still to be proven. Reckoning does well to mask its more barren areas with some fantastical architectural touches, like sparkling magic-enthused trees and destroyed historical structures, but when it comes to the final product, papering over empty environments will only keep us distracted for so long.

So far then, it's the combat that's really had us sold on Reckoning, a mixture of magic and melee combat immediate enough to satisfy while carrying an incredible amount of





"Look out Molyneux!"

Click here to see the enhanced version of this shot! 

RECKONING

> Kingdoms of Amalur cont.

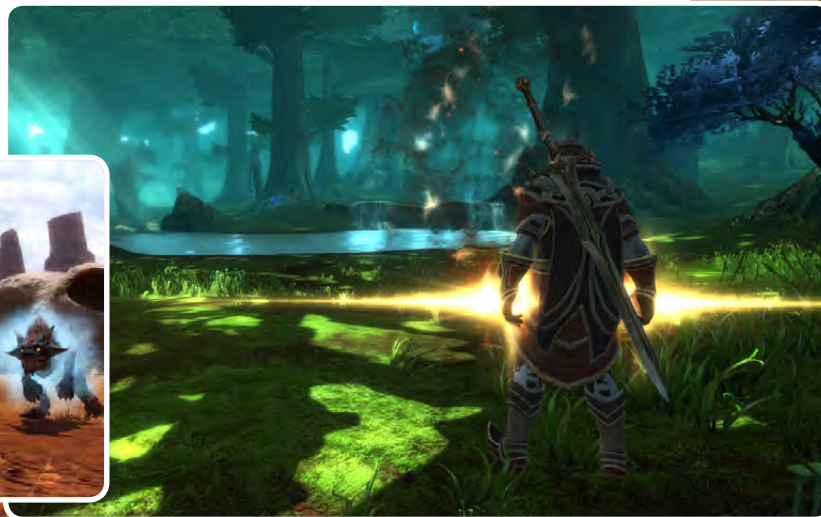
depth. Like Fable, players are actively encouraged to utilise magic and a main weapon, using a sufficiently complicated skill tree to level up certain abilities and excel in certain crafts. It's also possible to build your character into one of the more traditional classes: a bow specialist, a back-stabbing Scout, a staff-wielding Mage, or a hammer-wielding Warrior. But (and in a move that every future RPG should adopt) you won't be locked into your initial choice thanks to attribute-altering cards.

This statistical analysis of the combat runs deep underneath the intuitive and powerful battle engine, with combat moves similar to what you might find in typical third-person hack and slashers. Players are able to see off enemies with wince-inducing finishers. One type we witnessed seeing

our protagonist slitting a worm in half from head to toe. And in addition to regular skirmishes there are boss battles which borrow shamelessly from EA Visceral's Dante's Inferno, including a 20-storey tall Jabba the Hutt-looking monster.

On the surface it would be fairly easy to dismiss EA's fantasy as another Fable wannabe – and releasing so soon after RPG-behemoth Skyrim may not exactly work in its favour. But while it may lack originality and stray slightly too close to convention to really pose a threat to the competition, to dismiss it altogether would be criminally unjust.

Reckoning takes the staples of other beloved franchises and ties them all together into a package built for both RPG experts and newcomers. Look out Molyneux – the day of Reckoning is clearly nigh. ●



360Zine
RECKONING

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE



FIRST IMPRESSIONS



Everyone's fantasy or an RPG nightmare? Find out next month





IN STORES 18.11.11
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Publisher: Namco Bandai
Developer: Project Soul
Heritage: Soulcalibur
Kinect Compatible: No
ETA: 3rd February

**PREVIEW
FEEDBACK!**
Will you be
choosing
Ezio in SCV?

SOULCALIBUR V

A new challenger approaches!

Project Soul has always taken itself a little bit too seriously for our liking. Take Soulcalibur V for example. If we were to make a bet, we'd say that most of you were only really interested in picking it up for the chance to beat up Maxi as Assassin's Creed: Revelations star Ezio Auditore di Firenze, or see what tight suit Ivy has managed to squeeze herself into this time. [In case you're wondering, readers, it's an unashamedly arousing open-front fur jacket - Ed].

But no, at the forefront of the latest Cali, there's a convoluted story about two cursed swords having a disagreement in 17th century Europe which sees main character Patroklos deliver some awkward dialogue and smash in a few rebels'

faces on his journey to take down SC-baddy Nightmare.

So, Soulcalibur V doesn't exactly break the mould, but that was never Namco's intention. This is a sequel built purely for the fans, a title that celebrates its much-loved, well-endowed characters and irons out the creases found in its recent fun but flawed predecessors.

But you're probably all wondering one thing: how well does Ezio fit into a fighting game, particularly after the poor execution of guest characters found in previous Soulcaliburs? Well, after spending a few hours getting to grips with him, he's actually a surprisingly great fit for the series.

Ezio's a well-balanced character, well equipped for dealing with combat at both long and short range, and having learned brand-new moves

"Ezio's a surprisingly great fit for Soulcalibur"





"A sequel built purely for the fans"

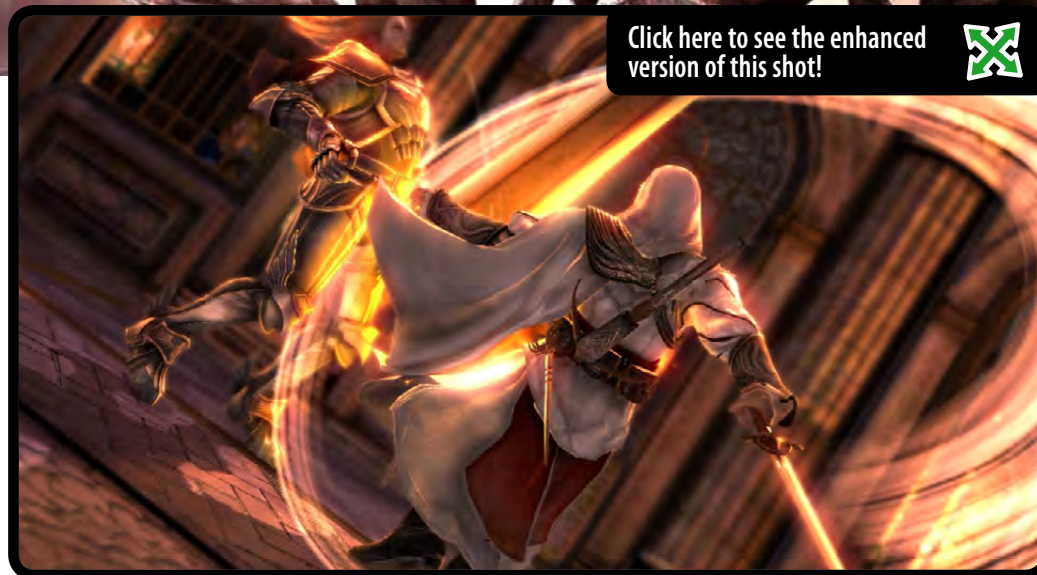
> Soul Calibur V continued

specifically for the game. The majority of them make use of his dual hidden blades, with our typical fighting style (ie. button mashing) resulting in barrages of short, sharp swipes and kicks. Additional moves tied to his hidden gun and crossbow mean skilled players will be able to surprise their opponent from distance – with the gun being a terrifically powerful tool, able to rattle off unblockable, HP-destroying bullets. We can see those horrified faces now – an unblockable gun? – but don't worry, as its inclusion isn't as game-breaking as it sounds. Project Soul has struck the balance perfectly, and using it leaves the player static and open to attack for a good second or so before firing.

But besides the guest characters themselves, Soulcalibur's main attraction has always been its expertly choreographed

Swan Lake-of-death combos – the most fancy we've seen being Ezio's 'Full Synchronisation', a deadly powerful Critical Edge move that sees him assault his opponent with the blades, gun and crossbow all at the same time.

And that's Soulcalibur V in a nutshell. A beautiful, often mesmeric beat-'em-up whose fights can look like a violent Strictly when put in the hands of the right players, remaining accessible enough for the button-mashing mass market to have a certain amount of fun with. It certainly won't convert non-believers, nor has it really changed all that much since the first game all those years ago. But in the battle for 2012's top fighter, Soulcalibur V certainly has the potential to deliver a knockout blow to Street Fighter X Tekken when it launches next month. ●



Click here to see the enhanced version of this shot!



360Zine



PERCENTAGE COMPLETE



FIRST IMPRESSIONS



An uninspired story may unsettle an otherwise knockout fighter

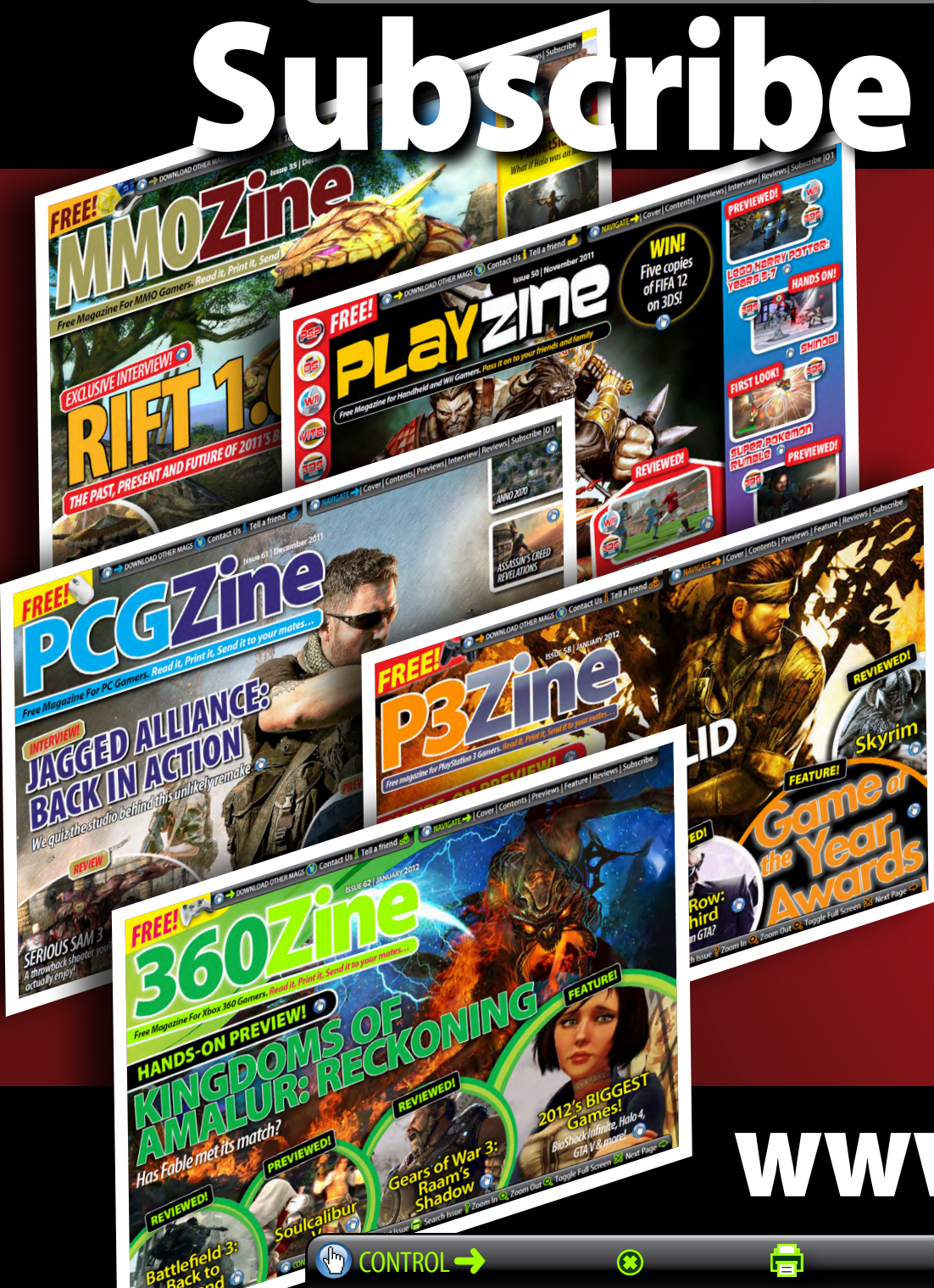


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METRO-SEXUAL

The secrets of the new dashboard!



Just unlocked Gears 3's Seriously 3.0 Achievement and want to tell your friends? Now you can. By syncing up your Facebook profile with your Xbox 360, you can tell your friends about any achievement you've earned or any game you've completed 100%. Just scroll to the Social tab, select your avatar and click on Achievements. Then find whatever game or Achievement you want and push X to share! But remember, no one likes a show off. . .

Facebook Bragging Rights

Love whatever's in your disc tray? Then the new dash is able to recommend other games you might enjoy playing too.

Push X while hovering over your disc tray icon, then hit the left bumper to bring up a list of games the Xbox 360 thinks you might like. Who knows, you might find a hidden gem you'd never even thought of playing.

Game Recommendations

It's no secret that the new dash has been developed firmly with Kinect in mind. But if you're lucky enough to have one, did you know you can browse the Xbox Live Marketplace for games that specifically take advantage of the hardware?

Head to the Marketplace and then aim for the 'Featured' tab. Here you'll spot a handy little icon called 'Kinect Games'. Click it, and you'll see every Kinect-supported game, DLC, app and demo available, as well as a few interesting videos about the tech behind the hardware.

Kinect Krazy

The new 'My Games' tab automatically loads every game installed to your hard drive, plus your XBLA collection, downloaded demos and indie games – quite the mess if you're a devoted 360 gamer. But if you want an easier way to manage your games, or want the tab to just load up your XBLA titles, then you can.

Head to My Games and click 'Show' at the top of the screen. From here you can filter which types of games you want the tab to load. Simple!

Sort Your Collection

Kinectimals

3 friends playing now
5 friends with beacons

If you have a funky Windows Phone 7, you're now able to keep tabs on your Xbox Live profile, set beacons and view your friends' activity much more easily than ever before. Just download the Windows Phone 7 Companion, activate Companions in your 360's System Settings, and you'll be good to go!

Phone Companion





GEARS OF WAR 3: RAAM'S SHADOW

Going in for the Kryll

Publisher:

Microsoft Studios

Developer: Epic Games

Heritage: Gears of

War series

Kinect Compatible: No

Price: 1,200 Microsoft Points

Requires: Gears of War 3

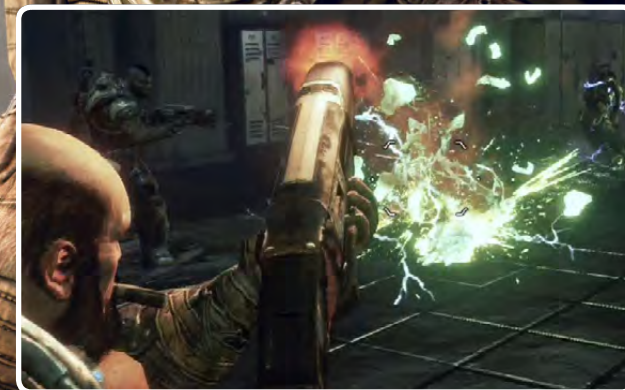
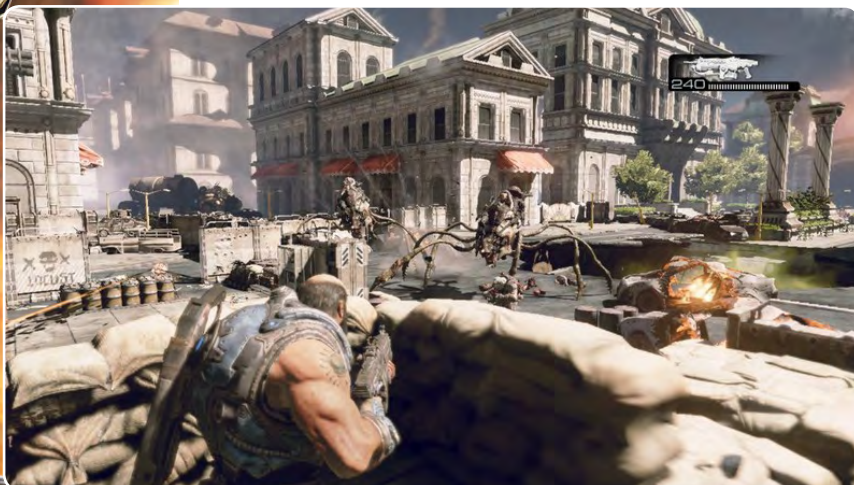
OUT NOW

There's only really one question you need to ask yourself when deciding whether or not to pick up Gears 3's latest DLC... why *wouldn't* you want to jump at the chance of playing as ol' big bad scaly face himself, General Raam, and use the awesome might of the Locust to help put an end to those COG do-gooders? Exactly.

Alternating control between Raam and Zeta squad (a new Gears team made up of half new and half familiar characters), Raam's Shadow is a 2.5

hour mini-campaign that expands upon the devices found within Gears 3's Beast mode, offering players the first opportunity to play as a team of Locust within a Gears campaign.

The story takes you back to the start of the series, pitting players in the role of Zeta squad as they evacuate civilians of Sera's city of



> Raam's Shadow continued

Ilima just prior to the events of the original Gears of War, before switching sides to play as Raam and his legion of cronies ordered to stop them. We all know how it's going to end, of course as Raam can't die. But it's Epic's well-executed structure which sees the two warring factions gradually come closer and closer together that makes Raam's Shadow a compelling campaign.

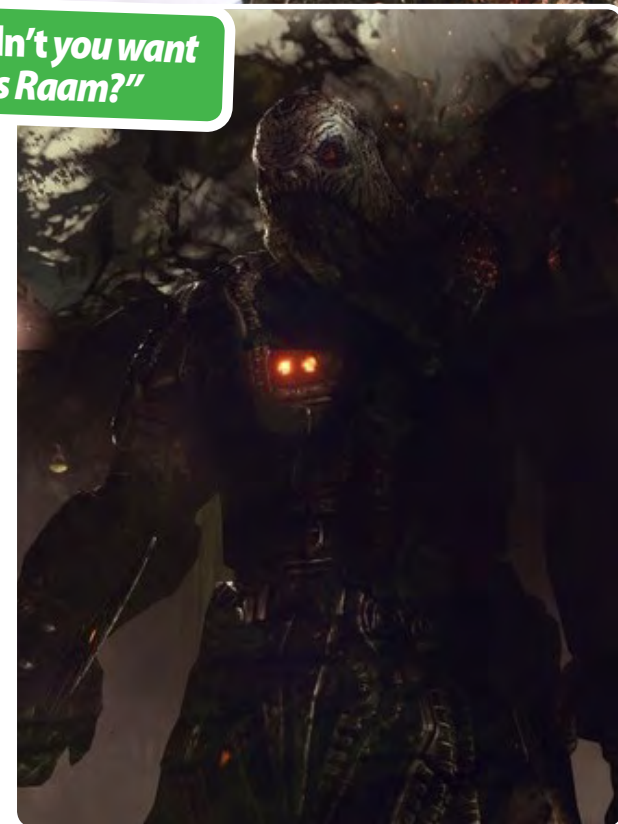
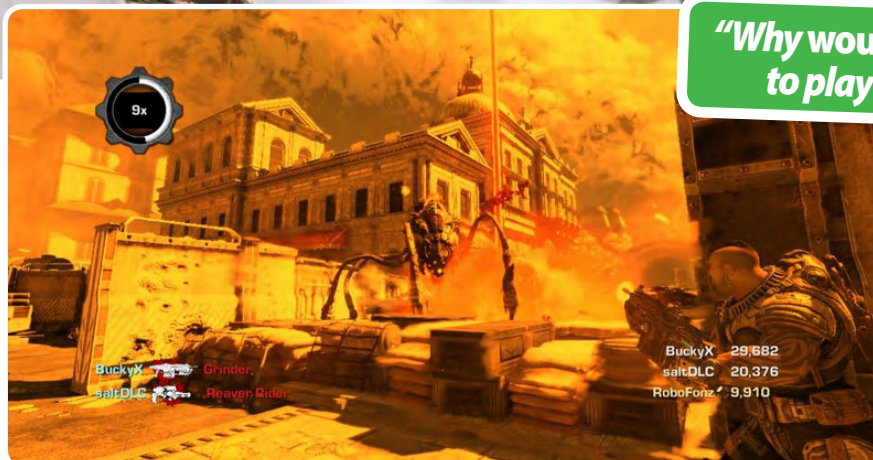
After three full campaigns playing as the Gears, controlling hulking great baddie Raam and his squadron of Locust is obviously the more interesting of the two factions, with his abilities offering a great alternative to Gears' standard cover shooting. Raam has two methods of attack: his Kryll Finger, which directs an army of the razor-winged bats towards whichever COG you're pointing at, and a powerful knife charge identical

to the Retro Lancer's stab attack. Both are immensely satisfying to use (in our opinion, nothing beats turning the good guys into a puff of red mist using the Kryll), but their novelty can begin to wear off once you realise Raam lacks the depth and control offered by Gears' typical cover-based gunplay.

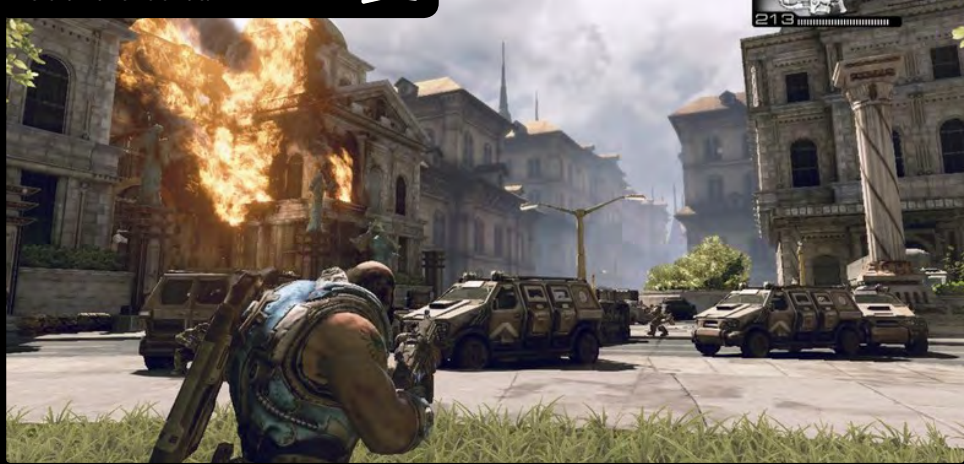
Even the Zeta sections can eventually begin to wane, mainly due to their overly repetitive design and dire dialogue. New

mechanics like controlling the Hammer of Dawn using a new top-down 'command centre' view can help switch up the pace, but they're criminally short-lived, taking up around two minutes of play time throughout the entire campaign. Objectives outside of the final boss fight can often extend to nothing more than wave-based killing sprees, with the reuse of Gears 1's emergence holes throughout gifting Epic the

"Why wouldn't you want to play as Raam?"



Click here to see the enhanced version of this shot!





"This is one of the more interesting campaigns in Gears' history"

> Raam's Shadow continued

opportunity to be lazy in its mission design. By the time the credits roll you'll definitely realise that the short length of the campaign is somewhat of a blessing in disguise.

Epic has more than enough mechanics to keep dragging you back in, though. Seeing the Gears 1 universe in a Gears 3 settings offers a superbly nostalgic backdrop to the fight, and it is an excellent premise thwarted by sub-standard mission design; an adventure that has thrilling highs, but too many dull and tedious low-points.

In addition to the campaign, Raam's Shadow includes six new characters for use within the game's multiplayer, 10 new achievements worth 250 gamerscore and an exclusive 'Chocolate' weapon skin set.

It's the structure and sheer premise of Raam's Shadow, then – the invitation to play as Raam, and play what is effectively a Gears 1 sub-campaign within the Gears 3 engine – that makes this DLC one of the more interesting campaigns in Gears of War's history. Epic's reliance on lazy wave-based gameplay can eventually start to grate and you'll have it finished within an evening's worth of play, but if you're desperate for more Gears, Raam's Shadow is a worthwhile expansion to one of the Xbox 360's top shooters. ●

360Zine Verdict

A well-executed story makes Raam a must for Gears fans

- Raam's a great character
- Interesting plot execution
- Repetitive missions get tiresome

78%

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Publisher: EA

Developer: DICE

Heritage: Battlefield series,
Mirror's Edge

Kinect Compatible: No

Price: 1,200 Microsoft Points

Requires: Battlefield 3

OUT NOW

BATTLEFIELD 3: BACK TO KARKAND

Middle Eastern promise

It may have turned up in four previous Battlefield games, but Wake Island is *not* BF3's Executive Producer's favourite map. Shock, right? So what is? Well, that honour falls to Battlefield 2's Strike at Karkand, DICE's superb Middle Eastern urban sprawl, whose high rise buildings and tight alleyways make for some spectacularly tactile combat.

Both maps, of course, feature on Battlefield 3's first map pack..., er, *expansion* pack, Back to Karkand. As it did with the full game, EA's once again

beaten Activision out of the starting blocks with its big shooter, packing in four new (old) maps, four additional vehicles (including the hover-capable F-35 jet and the utterly pointless yet hilarious construction site favourite Skid Loader), 10 brand-new weapons, an extra game mode and – most importantly – five new achievements.

Back to Karkand offers a nod back to PC predecessor Battlefield 2, featuring the best of BF2's maps remade in DICE's destruction-heavy Frostbite 2 engine. If you're a Battlefield nut then,

you'll have likely seen all of the maps on offer here before, but don't let that put you off. In addition to Strike at Karkand (whose towers make

**"A nod back to
PC predecessor
Battlefield 2"**



> Back to Karkand cont.

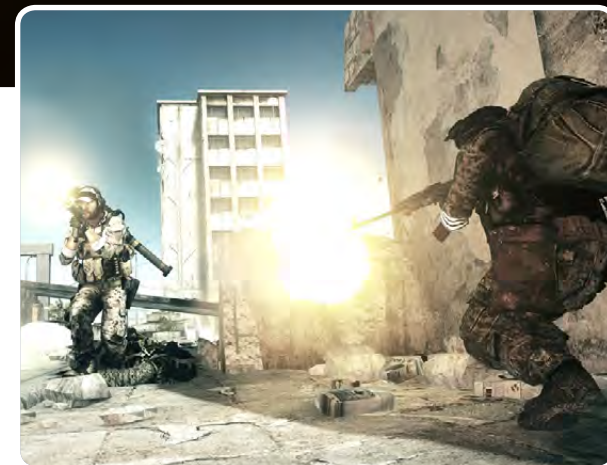
use of FB2's destruction far better than any of BF3's on-disc maps), Battlefield 2's equally dusty and similarly urban maps Sharqi Peninsula and Gulf of Oman also feature – the former offering great scope for aerial warfare, and the latter leading to some brilliant vertical assaults amidst its craneyard. As you'd expect, they fit Battlefield far better than some of BF3's existing fast-paced deathmatch-inspired battlegrounds, but it's the prospect of classic map Wake Island that will have most BF fans plonking down the cash on some Microsoft Points, its unique horseshoe design clearly as much of a DICE favourite as it is ours.

Wake Island's been altered slightly for Back to Karkand, outfitted in a new modern-day, oily setting and with its flag points reduced from five down to three. Its superb design and great mix of

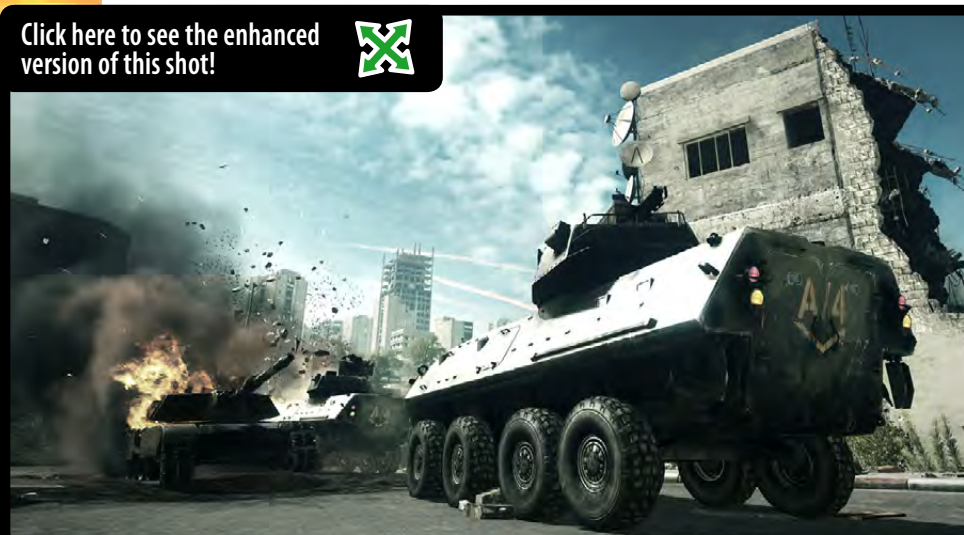


"Wake Island's unique design is clearly as much of a DICE favourite as it is ours"

land, aquatic and aerial vehicles still makes it one of the better maps in the franchise – the island's two prongs provoking some tense sniper stand-offs and daring suicide runs – but its overexposure can often threaten to bore. The map also tends to highlight Frostbite 2's limits on the 360, and sniping from one side of the island to the other can often expose the



Click here to see the enhanced version of this shot!





"Each of the maps are as good as, if not better than those found on the disc"



> Back to Karkand cont.

reduced polygon geometry and low-res textures required to keep up performance over longer draw distances.

And that's not the only criticism we have of the pack. DICE has chosen to lock Back to Karkand's new weapons behind 'Assignments', a new unlock system similar to Call of Duty's Challenges that unlocks specific weapons once certain requirements have been met. To unlock the FAMAS, for example, you'll have to heal and revive 10 players. That's fine, but some assignments can require lengthy time investment, with one assignment in particular being unfairly difficult. Honestly, how many times have you managed to kill an enemy with a repair torch?

Balancing issues two months on are also far more prevalent than at launch, with matchmaking consistently grouping high-ranking players on one team and lower-ranked on the other. With advanced equipment available to higher-ranked players, it gives one team an incredibly unfair advantage. B2K's new game mode,



Conquest Assault, which sees one team start the game in control of every flag point, is easily the weakest and laziest of those available, too – and that's including the dreaded Team Deathmatch.

So, is the release of Back to Karkand a good time to jump back in with Battlefield 3? Well, while it may feature the best maps we've ever seen in a download, it isn't quite Battlefield's best ever DLC – the scope and ambition of BFBC2's: Vietnam still holds that title. But for the first of many new packs for Battlefield 3, Back to Karkand's a great start, with each of the four maps as good as, if not better, than those already on the disc. Next stop: New York. ●

360Zine Verdict

Nothing very new, but who cares when it's this much fun?



Battlefield's best maps



New weapons are powerful...



...But they take too long to unlock

84%



Developer: Sonic Team
Heritage: Sonic series
Kinect Compatible: No
Price: 400 Microsoft Points
OUT NOW

SONIC CD

A downloadable classic

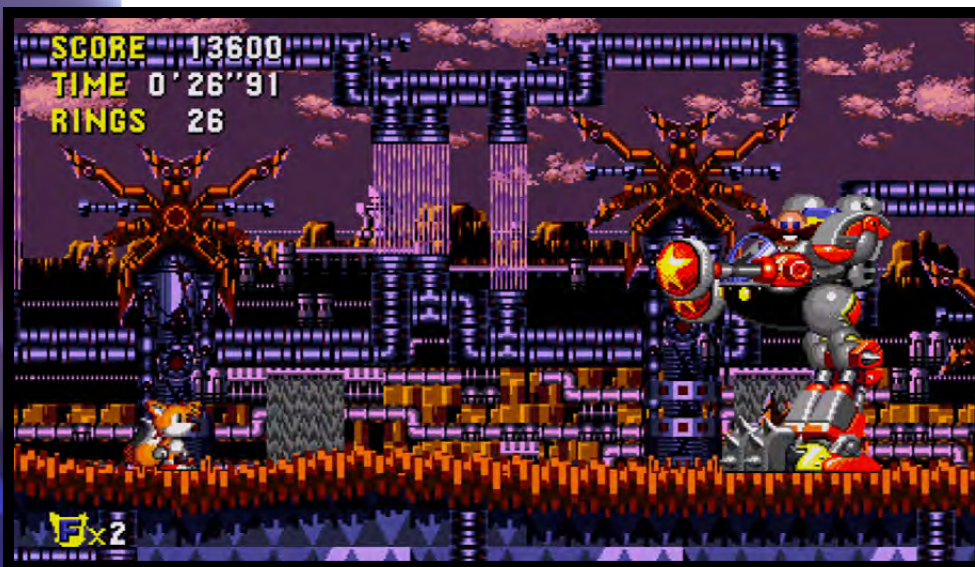
Back when CDs were considered strange little round shiny things from the future, this Sonic gem was wowing SEGA's most devoted fans on the Mega Drive's ill-fated add-on Mega CD. So that explains the name, but given its quality (and in light of the other 2D Sonics which have appeared on more compilation releases, digital platforms and bonus discs than we can count) it still surprises us that this XBLA release is the first time Sonic CD has appeared on a console released this side of the 21st Century.

Sonic CD is one of the greatest Sonic games around, in our opinion only narrowly beaten by Sonic 2. It's a grittier affair than the green-hilled and bright blue-skied themes of other 2D Sonics, sporting a grimmer colour palette and sombre storyline which sees Sonic traverse time zones to save girlfriend Amy from Metal Sonic, rescue Time Crystals from little UFOs, and ultimately save Little Planet from the clutches of Robotnik.

"Sonic CD is still one of the pinnacles of Sonic's career"

CD's levels are different to other 2D Sonics, with Sonic able to travel between past, present and future versions of each zone by reaching a certain speed. They're never as memorable as some found in other Sonics, but their design is the most ambitious in the series. Using the super Retro Engine, emulation here is perfect, running at a smooth 60fps and with a save feature that lets you continue from the start of your most recent act, while the soundtrack, something Sonic CD is most often remembered for by its fans, features the full Japanese score cut from the original Western release.

In all likelihood, Sonic CD's XBLA release is probably the first chance you'll have had to try it out, and if it is, stop reading and head straight to the Marketplace. But even if it isn't, the game's intricate level design does well to remind of how good Sonic once was. Even 20 years after its original release, Sonic CD still stands as one of the pinnacles of Sonic's career. Superb! ●



360Zine Verdict

A super Sonic blast from the past, and at an unmissable price!



Ace levels, superb soundtrack



Bargain price



70 minutes long, art style will divide

89%



DEAD OR ALIVE



Been rummaging around the bargain bin? Each month we delve back into the multiplayer of a classic title to find out whether anyone's still playing it



Call of Duty 2's destroyed French villages offered a powerfully bleak backdrop to the WWII FPS gunplay.

This Month

RELEASED: 05/12/2005
PUBLISHER: Activision
DEVELOPER: Infinity Ward
PLAYERS: 2-8
ONLINE MULTIPLAYER MODES: Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, Capture the Flag, Headquarters, Search and Destroy
ONLINE ACHIEVEMENTS? No
HOW MUCH? Around £8



What is it?

No biggie, just one of the most fondly remembered chapters in the biggest videogames series in the world. Call of Duty 2 was Infinity Ward's final fling with the WWII era before moving onto Modern Warfare, and this featured some fantastic firepower, including the satisfyingly meaty M1 Garand and BAR machine gun.

How many people are playing?

Disappointingly few. Maps were like ghost

towns with only two or three people fighting in most of the games we played – and that's when we could actually find a match to join in the first place. In fact, the situation is so dire that you'll likely be hounded by fans desperate to play a match long after you've left.

Is it still fun?

The lack of a sprint button makes it hard to re-adjust yourself back to CoD2 after years spent playing the more recent games, and the gunplay can feel relatively sluggish and loose

by comparison. But much to our surprise, CoD2 still has some of the best-designed maps in the entire series, including the destroyed French village of Carentan and Moscow, which still has the potential for some epic 'Enemy at the Gate'-style sniper showdowns. It *has* aged, though. By today's standards the visuals are poor, while customisation and Create A Class options are noticeably absent.

Rest in peace, Call of Duty 2.

Verdict: DEAD

In **360Zine** Issue 63

HITMAN ABSOLUTION

Does Diana get it?
We check out Agent 47's next mission!

PLUS!
FINAL FANTASY XIII-2 SOULCALIBUR V
INVERSION ANARCHY REIGNS BINARY DOMAIN

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